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**Harold Sparrow
President and CEO, YMCA of Greater Hartford
Governor Lamont's Proposed FY 23 Budget Adjustments
February 15, 2022**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Harold Sparrow, and I am the president and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Hartford.

I urge the state of Connecticut to increase their investment in Care4Kids and School Readiness. During the past 20 years, these programs have only received a three percent increase in funding from the state of Connecticut. During that same time, the minimum wage has increased by over 50%, and inflation has risen by almost 50% as well. Almost 1,400 children utilize the Care4Kids program, and 1,000 children are enrolled in a school readiness with one of our YMCAs in Connecticut. At the YMCA of Greater Hartford alone, over 200 children are enrolled in Care4Kids and school readiness. It is imperative that our childcare centers receive a rate increase so that we can continue to provide safe and quality childcare to Connecticut's children.

Childcare is already unaffordable, and without a meaningful increase in reimbursement rates, the state will be making the children care system significantly more expensive.